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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDBU #0189 0351222
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041222Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0161
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0026
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0022
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0026
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0050
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0013
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0022

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 000189

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND CA/OCS
ALSO FOR DS/IP/SCA, DS/ITA, DS/ATA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2013
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TI](#)
SUBJECT: SHOOT-OUT IN GARM, SITUATION CALM

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY: Tom Hushek, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S.
Embassy Dushanbe, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (SBU) Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko, the commander of OMON, the Interior Ministry's elite police squad, was killed February 2 in a 15-minute gunfight in Garm District, east of Dushanbe. Zakharchenko had reportedly led a 30-man unit to Garm to effect the arrest of Col. Mirzokhuja Ahmadov, a former commander from the United Tajik Opposition during the Tajik civil war, and until a month ago also head of a local Interior Ministry police squad in Garm. Three of Zakharchenko's men were injured; it is unclear how many were wounded or killed on the other side. Zakharchenko himself is credited with clearing the streets of civilians before allowing any gunfire.

2. (C) The Interior Ministry in Dushanbe reportedly fired Ahmadov from his position about one month ago. Post is not aware of the reasons behind his firing or the decision to arrest him now. Rumors range from longstanding political feuds to competition for local coal reserves. A squabble over control of narcotics trafficking routes led to a similar attempted arrest and gunfight one year ago in Khorogh in the Gorno-Badakhshan region. The Garm incident also carries echoes of the civil war which ended more than ten years ago. In the peace agreement, opposition figures such as Ahmadov received 30% of government jobs. The government in Dushanbe has whittled away at those numbers, and since President Rahmon's re-election in November 2006, many in the former opposition have lost their government positions and salaries.

3. (SBU) Zakharchenko was a close contact of the Embassy. His OMON unit is instrumental in providing security for the Embassy grounds. OMON has participated in several Anti-Terrorism Assistance training events funded through Diplomatic Security. Zakharchenko was the highest ranking non-ethnic Tajik that we know in the government.

4. (SBU) Post has issued a consular warden message recommending that AmCits not travel to Garm and the Rasht Valley until further information becomes available. We know of no AmCits currently in Garm. One private AmCit who was in town during the shooting was able to leave the next day. The U.S. non-governmental organization Mercy Corps is active in the region, but its resident American staff is currently in Dushanbe. The OSCE cancelled scheduled travel to Garm by international staff over the weekend. Its office remains open with national staff. The UN has temporarily closed its

office in Garm, with its national staff asked to stay home for a couple days. The local staff of these organizations have been in touch with their Dushanbe offices and have reported that the situation in Garm remains calm since the gunfight on February 2.

JACOBSON